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AUTHOR Lambert, Leo M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes an evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Seminars Program of the Honors Colleges at the State University of New York at Oswego. The Program, which was sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, involved teams of faculty and advanced students from the Honors College in the development of five interdisciplinary courses. Titles of the seminars, which became permanent curricular offerings, were: Women and Men, Energy, The Fallen World, Myth and Symbol, and Tolerance and Prejudice. Five major concerns guided the evaluation: (1) how the course development process evolved; (2) faculty experiences with the program and faculty views of the most significant outcomes of their work; (3) experiences of student seminar participants and their contributions to the new curricula; and (4) perceptions of students enrolled in the courses. Data collection included unstructured interviews, mail surveys, and site visits. Three phases that all seminar groups encountered during the development process were: organization and attention to group process; exploration and brainstorming; and creating a structure, process, or core of knowledge. Student and faculty perceptions are summarized, and the student and faculty evaluation survey forms are appended. (SW)

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A Discussion of the Evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Seminars Program of the Honors College at the State University of New York at Oswego

Leo M. Lambert, Ph.D.
Syracuse University

October 15, 1985

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INTRODUCTION

This paper summarizes an evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Seminars Program of the Honors College at the State University of New York at Oswego. This study was conducted, in part, to fulfill a requirement of the program's major sponsor, the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), for an independent evaluation.

The Interdisciplinary Seminars Program was designed with two broad goals in mind: 1) to develop five interdisciplinary courses, employing teams composed of faculty from a variety of disciplines and advanced students from the Honors College, and 2) to maintain these new courses as permanent offerings in the curriculum of the College. However, the project proposal lists a number of other objectives as well: "to encourage students . . . to gain competence in interdisciplinary thought," to provide a forum for students to "engage in a free exchange of ideas with faculty," and to provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the structuring of a topic of study. Also, the project was intended to complement other campus efforts that promote liberal arts study, most notably the Honors College and the program of General Education requirements. With regard to faculty, the proposal cites an expectation that faculty participants would realize a boost in morale, and that the seminars would provide an opportunity to "reflect on their disciplinary assumptions" and to "take new perspectives to their teaching."

Each of the five-course development seminar teams approached a topic or problem of a nature which warranted an interdisciplinary investigation. The seminars were titled Women and Men, Energy, The Fallen World, Myth and Symbol, and Tolerance and Prejudice.

Because the goals of the program were very broad, the project directors and the evaluator defined four general questions to guide the evaluation:

1. How did this process of interdisciplinary course development evolve? What similarities and differences were evident across the five development seminars?
2. How did faculty describe their experiences with the program, and what did they perceive to be the most significant outcomes of their work?
3. How did student participants in the development seminars describe their experiences, and what contributions did they make to the new curricula?
4. How did students enrolled in the courses developed by the FIPSE-sponsored seminars perceive these new offerings? How are these new courses different from "typical" college courses?

The philosophy and scope of this evaluation was defined in the late fall of 1982 and early spring of 1983 by the author and the project directors. The evaluation was a qualitative, phenomenological study; the emphasis of the study focused on describing and documenting the experiences of the participants in the FIPSE project. Indeed, the final report made considerable use of participants' written statements and transcripts of participant interviews to portray the program in the words of those who knew it most intimately. It is not an attempt to quantitatively assess "student growth" or "faculty development" over time.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this evaluation were collected by several means: unstructured interviews (most of which were recorded and transcribed), a survey mailed to

faculty who participated in the development seminars, a survey mailed to students who participated in the development seminars, and a survey distributed to students who participated in the first offerings of the new interdisciplinary courses. Also, records pertaining to the program (correspondence, course outlines, the original project proposal, self-evaluations by the development seminar participants) were collected and analyzed. During the course of the evaluation the author made four visits to the Oswego campus (3-11-83, 5-5-83, 7-14-83, 11-21-83), and the project directors visited the author twice at Syracuse University (2-17-83 and 10-14-83).

The first phase of the evaluation consisted of a rather in-depth look at the first of the interdisciplinary development seminars, the Women and Men seminar. The original evaluation plan called for careful study of the first seminar in order to "document the process of course development and to provide useful information to those about to embark on a similar venture." Unfortunately, the Women and Men seminar was beset by several organizational problems, so the lessons learned by succeeding groups were of an organizational nature, e.g., the importance of scheduling meeting times well in advance of the start of the seminar. Succeeding groups learned little from Women and Men in terms of how to go about designing an interdisciplinary curriculum or strategies for synthesizing a diverse group of seminar topics.

The second phase of the evaluation consisted of visiting the Myth and Symbol, Energy, and Fallen World development seminars during the summer of 1983. Unstructured interviews were conducted with the faculty and student participants, which were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

During the final phase of the evaluation (late fall 1983 through May 1984), the surveys referred to above were administered and collected. Also

during this period the author visited the Tolerance and Prejudice development seminar.

The directors of the FIPSE project, Professors Sara Varhus and William Whipple, were consistently helpful in aiding with evaluation activities, including the preparation of mailing lists, the scheduling of group interviews, and responding to correspondence and requests for information.

THE PROCESS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The essential challenge in describing the process of interdisciplinary course development was to attempt to understand the uniqueness and and diversity of each of the five seminar groups (and their respective individual development processes), and yet remain alert to elements and phases common to most of or all of the groups. This section is devoted to exploring these common phases in hopes of portraying the experiences which the groups shared. Commentary and anecdotes provided by the five seminar groups will be presented for illustration.

There are three roughly defined phases which all of the seminar groups encountered as part of the development process. These phases are defined as:

- the organization and attention to group process phase,
- the exploration, "brainstorming," or "freefall" phase, and
- the creation phase (of a structure, a process, or a core of essential knowledge).

Before these phases are discussed in detail, it is important to offer several caveats. First, the phases are not independent and distinct; a given

group may be well into its "exploration stage," yet still in need of resolving some organizational issues. The process, then, is not necessarily a linear one.

Second, the process that a given group might evolve may not necessarily reflect the order of the phases as presented above; the Tolerance and Prejudice group created an organizing framework by examining historical and psychological models of prejudice before fully exploring a range of topics, readings, and activities for the course.

Third, the phases described above were not of equal importance for all seminar groups. One group placed considerable emphasis on the importance of planning and organization relative to other groups; another group wished to devote the bulk of its efforts to the "exploration" phase. These cautions are offered to help the reader understand that interdisciplinary course development is not a simple 1-2-3 process. Still, each general phase merits attention in order to better understand the "big picture" of interdisciplinary course development at Oswego.

Evidence

This description of the common phases of interdisciplinary course development is based on data collected by two means: 1) transcripts of interviews conducted with the seminar groups following the completion of their respective development processes, and 2) faculty and student written responses to the question, "Describe your experiences with the process of developing an interdisciplinary curriculum. How would you describe the major stages of the development process, from the initial formation of the development group to the creation of a final product of some sort? What stands out in your mind as being most notable about this process? Did the group's

accomplishments meet your expectations of the development effort? How could the process be streamlined?"

The Organization and Attention to Group Process Phase

In this phase, the faculty and students faced a number of concerns and anxieties, aside from the more mundane organizational problems, such as finding common meeting times. Sometimes these concerns were discussed openly, but other times faculty and students wondered about them privately. The following represent the most frequently cited issues which the groups grappled with early on:

- Can we agree on common terminology, e.g., what is "tolerance" and "prejudice?"
- Should I be cautious about treading on the "turf" of discipline? How far should I stray from my disciplinary expertise?
- What is the role of the student seminar participants? Are they "equals" or research assistants or "sounding boards?"
- Who will this new course be for? What should be the level of difficulty?
- Where does each of us stand on the topic of _____? What are our motives for participating in this seminar? What are our biases, individually and collectively?
- How will we pull together our diverse backgrounds and synthesize a course which is not just multidisciplinary?

These issues are not trivial and require considerable soul searching and attention to the concerns and feelings of others. A thorough discussion of some of these concerns can often provide a firm foundation for the future work of a seminar; however, some of these issues are potentially divisive,

and, if given short shrift, may impede the successful functioning of the group. The importance of this early stage of the process cannot be overstated.

Also, with regard to organizing a seminar group, some faculty seemed convinced that their group's preliminary meeting for a weekend retreat was critical:

> The preliminary stuff we did here, I think, was a very important part of our ability to get anything done in a three-week period. At that session at Fallbrook, we . . . describe[d] . . . a plan of action which was to include each of us discussing with students and making a presentation in class on subjects that were of particular interest to us. I think that the preliminary meeting is really what set the tone for the course. (personal interview)

Opportunities for planning the interdisciplinary seminars (especially those which allow participants to meet for an extended time period) appear to be particularly important.

The Exploration Stage

All of the seminar groups described a stage of their activity as "brainstorming" or "freefall." Essentially, the groups described a time devoted to generating topics, ideas, readings, themes, and resources which were relevant to the topic of study. It is also a time to define and redefine the problem at hand. The groups described this period as one of the most energetic, dynamic, and stimulating periods of their work. One Energy Seminar participant described how this technique was used to define the scope of the group's task:

> The initial problem was defining the scope of what would be a viable seminar. . . . A decisive breakthrough came early in our meetings when we decided to list on a blackboard all the topics that could be presented in such a seminar. Each of the participants listed topics of concern to him/her, defended the importance of the topic, and suggested ways of presenting the material to a class. (exerpt from questionnaire)

A member of the Fallen World Seminar described this intense period of discussing a wide spectrum of ideas as the means to achieving a sense of "interdisciplinarity:"

> I think the real advantage of the freefall or lack of structure in the beginning is [in] seeing the final product--in that you don't see a section that's political science, a section that anthropology, and a section that's biology. I think that this is truly an interdisciplinary seminar because we were able, with this freefall, to put our disciplinary blinders aside. . . . I think that what we did was we identified problems--identified general problems, then used particular disciplines to pursue the problems, but we didn't have our disciplines define the problems as is often done. We weren't wrapped up in those methodological blinders that are associated with a narrow disciplinary approach. So once we identified the problem, whatever disciplines the seminarians come from, they will be able to integrate the diverse series of disciplines. (personal interview)

A problem with this phase is that the period of exploration may be extended for too long. A member of the Women and Men Seminar describes his group's dilemma:

> We began by trying to block out a series of general topics or questions that seemed to be addressed within the framework of our seminar proposal. In a loose fashion, then, we divided these topics among ourselves and began to survey what was available on each topic. The products of these efforts were bibliographies--lots of them, some annotated, more not. Very quickly we realized we were developing enough material for an entire curriculum and that no single course could begin to cover the range of topics and questions and readings we were suggesting as appropriate. (exerpt from questionnaire)

The challenge for the groups was to promote exploration, but at the same time remain sensitive to the needs to complete the work of the seminar.

The exploration stage, then, is the heart of the development process. It is a time for problem definition (Is there a problem? What is the nature of the problem?), and for full and rich discussions which probe the many facets and dimensions of the problem. It is also a time to examine the spectrum of ideas, readings, and resources which may be relevant to the topic of study. Most important, it is a time to exchange old prejudices and narrow world

views for new intellectual challenges, breadth, comprehensiveness, and, yes, a degree of uneasiness and uncertainty.

The Creation Phase

Each development seminar described a creation--for example, a set of "core modules" or an organizing/conceptual framework for the course itself, which is the seminar's legacy for faculty and students who will be teachers and learners in the courses which the seminars strived to develop. These creations are important to note because they represent the essence of their respective development seminars; they are not simply a distillation or a summary of the groups' works, but an attempt to capture the groups' best thinking and pass it on so that others might profit. Each group took a somewhat different approach to this task, and each approach has merit.

The Energy Seminar organized a set of core modules and a set of optional modules from their original large list of course topics. One faculty participant describes this strategy:

> First of all, we discovered that although there seemed to be a virtual plethora of possible topics, many topics that seemed to stand alone could be easily grouped together so that the number of actual topics was greatly reduced in number. Secondly, we realized after the individual presentations that there were some topics that all the participants agreed should form the core of any seminar. This led us to the formulation that we could stay with through the final report--a basic core that all courses should teach and a set of suggested modules that would depend on the interests and expertise of instructors. (exerpt from questionnaire)

The Myth and Symbol group also defined a core of essential topics, as reported by one faculty member:

> We thought certain topics were very essential, and it would be very disappointing if anybody taught a course in Myth and Symbol and didn't include at least these--these are very essential. . . . (personal interview)

The faculty in the Myth and Symbol seminar felt that it was their responsibility to not only define such a core, but to test student reactions and identify supporting materials for the course as well:

> [I]ts not very helpful to just turn over a shopping list to a group of people who want to teach a course [and then present] alternative structures [for organizing the shopping list]. Because anybody who is going to teach the course is going to come up with a structure. . . . So we didn't start with a structure, we started with a shopping list, narrowed it down, made presentations to try [topics] out--to see what they were like, how the students were going to react, and how we were going to pursue [questions] that were raised--and then actually came up with hard material, not just a bunch of outlines and bibliographies and lists of topics, but hard copy materials that people could use in the course. (personal interview)

The Fallen World Seminar took an alternative approach to creating its legacy, as reported by the seminar faculty:

> We centered on the process of teaching more than we did on content, and our outline reflects that. I take a dim view of any faculty member who has a task of creating a course to try to put down as much as possible in writing as to what the course should contain in its content. . . . We felt that the kind of process we went through we'd like to repeat [as seminar instructors] and not tell our students too much or direct them to read too narrowly; therefore, when you read our outline you will see that--I think it'll make sense what we're after--but you won't see much detail in terms of a syllabus. (personal interview)

Indeed, the course proposal (drafted by a student) contains a seven-page bibliography and a section titled "suggested teaching strategy," which stresses independent student research, as opposed to a group of "core topics" proposed by the two groups discussed earlier.

A third approach employed by the Tolerance and Prejudice seminar involves the creation of an "organizing framework" as the basic structure of the course. One faculty member comments:

> . . . it seems like we spend the first half of the semester putting together our organizing framework. I think we came . . . with an intuitive kind of sense of content what we would likely be dealing with in terms of prejudice and tolerance and so perhaps I saw it important that we spend time both exploring our own feelings about tolerance and prejudice but also getting together the

> historical and psychological frameworks while we were doing some reading well. It seems to me that we did the reverse [of the other seminars] because now these last couple of weeks where we've been dealing in a more structured way with the content [readings, texts, projects] and what a course outline might look like. . . . (personal inteview)

By taking this approach, the creation and "freefall" phases are obviously very intertwined. The integrated historical, psychological and literary framework established by the group could serve as a valuable reference for future faculty and students involved with the course, even though the specific content for the course may vary from semester to semester.

One faculty member in the Tolerance and Prejudice group felt a tension between formulating the organizing framework and discussing specific content which might be included in the course:

> I think I was very anxious to get into the course content, and I got rather impatient with our trying to set up the big picture, the scheme. I focus on more concrete objects more easily, and I feel much more at ease with the course now that we are homing in on possible texts, possible assignments, etc. I know we had to go through the other part of our procedure, but I did get a little concerned because I wanted to be sure that if I am one of the people teaching the course, I am prepared for it. . . . (personal interview)

Indeed, tensions between the abstract and the specific, between contemporary issues and historical background, as well as between the need for time to discuss ideas and the need to produce a final course outline were reported by most of the groups. It would seem that these and other tensions are an integral part of this creative process.

Finally, another kind of legacy for a seminar group to leave is a course outline prepared by an individual seminar member. A noteworthy example is the course outline prepared by Professor Robert Moore of the Women and Men seminar. An outline of this nature obviously reflects the opinions and values of the individual author, although the work of the entire group is likely to be evident in the outline.

The problem with a course outline produced by one or two group members is that other group members may believe that their thoughts and contributions are not reflected in a final course outline. A Myth and Symbol seminar participant expressed such a concern:

> I feel that the group produced more than enough course material and resources for the teaching of such a course. I was disappointed at the way the results were summarized and packaged at the end. Two members came with a proposed organization of our efforts and were extremely reluctant to have them amended. Given the shortness of time at the end, we agreed to meet again in the fall and reorganize the material and its summary. We never did that.

Of course, an outline prepared by one seminar member is a better than no effort at all. And at least one student participant, who visited the Women and Men course after the work of the seminar was finished, thought Professor Moore's efforts had been worthwhile:

> I'm not quite sure what my original expectations of our group's accomplishments were. I think I expected a much more specific final product than our outlines with its broad reference lits. This year I attended a class of the actual course, speaking briefly on information I had researched. Just by observation I could see that, with some work by the instructors to actually pick readings and assignments, we must have accomplished our goal. The class was running very smoothly. Students were very active as we had hoped and intended they would be. Much credit, however, must be given to the professors doing the teaching and stimulating participation.

While individually prepared course outlines may be an admirable attempt to bring the development effort to an orderly end, they may not, in all likelihood, reflect the entire seminar group's thinking as well as other creative efforts discussed earlier in this section.

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS

The faculty seminar participants were asked to respond in writing to the following question : "A stated goal of the project was 'to have a positive effect on faculty morale.' Was this experience a renewing and revitalizing one? Would you recommend a similar experience to a colleague?" Exerpts of the faculty responses were reported to the project directors.

Certain themes reoccur throughout these comments, as well in the transcripts of the interviews with the seminar members. Each of these interrelated themes is an expression of what the faculty valued about their experiences with the program:

- The faculty valued time for intellectual exchanges and for serious discussions with colleagues from other disciplines.
- The faculty valued the impetus to read broadly, and to discuss their reading with interested colleagues.
- The faculty valued the opportunity to form new collegial relationships and teaching partnerships with faculty outside their departments.
- The faculty valued a spirit which encouraged them to expand beyond comfortable disciplinary boundaries.

The original evaluation report quoted many exerpts from this faculty servey (see example below). The project directors reported that these sumamries of faculty responses were one of the most valuable aspects of the evaluation.

> Absolutely! With very heavy teaching schedules, most of us are starved for time to read and time for intellectual dialogue with our colleagues. This planning group provided both. It was a tremendously important investment in faculty development, one which the college would do well to make available on a much wider basis. I

cannot stress enough how important this aspect of the planning seminar was to me.

Teaching the course also brought considerable rewards, as it gave us who taught it a chance to continue the planning process and to expand our dialogue. In many ways, the whole experience was enhanced for me by being able to implement our ideas.

Bravo for a most productive experience! I feel privileged to have been a part of it.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLES

The role of the students in the development seminars was somewhat of an enigma to this evaluator; many of the student and faculty development seminar participants were uneasy about this issue as well. Perhaps the relatively small amount of attention which was devoted to defining the role of student participants in the FIPSE proposal reflects less-than-careful thought about the nature of the student's involvement. On the other hand, perhaps an unstructured role for students was appropriate given the diversity of seminar topics, faculty personalities, and student interests. Whatever the case, the interview and questionnaire data point out the major frustrations of the students:

- Many students reported that they were somewhat intimidated by the seminar faculty. They clearly did not have a disciplinary expertise to contribute to the seminars, as the faculty did, which made some feel uncomfortable about participating.
- A few students reported that the seminar discussions were dominated by perhaps over-enthusiastic faculty arguments and discussions. This made participation for these students difficult.
- Many students were confused about their status. Were they sounding-boards for faculty ideas, or were they expected to be more active?

How much effort was expected of them? (Both faculty and student participants were adjusting to new roles and responsibilities in the development process, so this concern is understandable.)

Despite these hurdles, the student participants reported some positive outcomes of the development process as well:

- Students felt they influenced the development of the seminar topics, especially in terms of encouraging faculty to include contemporary issues in the courses, or other issues that might be of particular interest to students.
- Students enjoyed getting to know faculty as people, as scholars, and as mentors, rather than simply as lecturers.

Student development seminar participants responded in writing to the following question on the student survey (Appendix B):

> A stated goal of the project was for students to "engage in a free exchange of ideas with faculty and confront sophisticated analyses of disciplinary approaches to a given topic. In addition to the fact that these students will contribute a useful perspective to the course development process, they will also, perhaps for the first time, shoulder responsibility for structuring the study of a topic." In your experience, were these goals realized for the student participants in the seminars?

The following is a sample exerpt of student's response. All of the points raised above are stated were the students' own words in the exerpts, and they are reinforced by other data sources as well. Again, the exerpts are included to give the project director's a sense of the students' tones and personal insights.

> There were three students and three professors in our group, and the professors definitely did the majority of the planning, although we were always consulted. Having never before had anything to do with a course, it was the professors who had to guide us and ask for our opinions as students as the groundwork was being laid.
>
> It was, however, a great opportunity to offer opinions as to what a course should or should not offer without having to worry

about being graded. It was an opportunity to interact with professors almost as colleagues, which does not happen frequently on campus.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES

This section explores student reaction to the new interdisciplinary courses developed by the faculty and student development seminar participants, who were the focus of the previous two sections. Student reaction to these new courses was guaged by means of a survey containing eleven open-ended questions. The interdisciplinary courses considered in this section are Women and Men, Myth and Symbol, and Fallen World.

Comparison of Interdisciplinary Course With a "Typical" Oswego Course

Students were asked to identify a course which was representative of the courses they had enrolled in at Oswego State. Professor William Whipple of the Honors College divided the bulk of student responses into two main categories. The first category he termed "mass market" courses, e.g., Psychology 100, Sociology 100, Meterology 100, Economics 101, and Western Heritage. These courses typically are the introductory offerings in a given department. He defined the second category as those courses students might elect after acquiring an interest in an area, although the courses are not necessarily a requirement for a major in the field, nor are they highly specialized. Examples in this group include: Abnormal Psychology, Adolescent Psychology, and Introduction to Shakespeare.

Next, students were asked to contrast their experience with their interdisciplinary course with that of the "typical course" referred to above. The responses most frequently provided were:

- The effort required of students in the interdisciplinary courses was greater.
- Class size in the interdisciplinary courses was smaller.
- The interdisciplinary courses had less lecture and required more discussion.
- Students in the interdisciplinary courses were more frequently encouraged to form their own opinions.
- More reading was required in the interdisciplinary courses.

Responses less frequently provided reported the interdisciplinary seminars as: being more difficult, requiring more out-of-class work, being more informal and less structured, being more vague and abstract, requiring more difficult writing assignments, providing multiple views on issues, providing better instruction, providing better variety of readings and texts, requiring less memorization, offering more intellectual discussions, having more accomplished students in the class, and having multiple instructors.

Only three students said the two courses were the same in terms of content, difficulty and effort. One student said both courses required one to question one's self, and one student reported putting more effort into the "typical" course.

Intellectual Processes

Question seven asked students to consider the effect, if any, the courses might have had on their ability to consider complex issues and problems. Students were asked if the intellectual processes they engaged in were somehow different from those they might engage in while enrolled in other courses at the College. In sum, students thought the courses challenged them to consider alternative viewpoints and world views, to tackle large,

complex issues and problems, and to form personal judgments and opinions. These courses were also a departure from rote learning. The data suggested that the new interdisciplinary offerings appear to have made a contribution toward reinforcing the important aims of the liberal arts curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

Data for this evaluation were collected by various means (surveys, interviews, course evaluations, examination of records) from a number of sources (project administrators, faculty, students participating in the development seminars, students enrolled in the interdisciplinary courses). The preponderance of evidence points to the fact the "Development of Interdisciplinary Courses in the Liberal Arts" project under the sponsorship of FIPSE was remarkably successful. With few exceptions, parties involved with the project described it in laudatory terms. The program has been successfully assimilated into the structure of the Honors College, which should help ensure its continuance. The total effort put forth by administrators, faculty and students was of high quality, and they are deserving of the highest commendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were offered in hopes that future similar efforts at the College at Oswego and at other institutions may be enhanced by what has been learned during this FIPSE project.

1. The College at Oswego must preserve the opportunity for faculty to team teach the interdisciplinary seminars. Without such commitment, the

vitality of the seminars is bound to wane. A single course instructor cannot provide students with multiple disciplinary perspectives on a topic so necessary to the life of these seminars; the lively interchanges between faculty within the seminar, so much appreciated by many students, would also obviously be lost. The College has acquired a notable addition to its liberal arts offerings, and it should strive to provide these seminars with the staffing support they deserve.

2. The College at Oswego should identify internal and external resources to maintain the interdisciplinary course development project. The FIPSE project has done an admirable job of accomplishing multiple objectives simultaneously: providing opportunities for faculty development, developing interdisciplinary curriculum, and offering challenging intellectual opportunities for good students. By providing release time opportunities for faculty and limited support for operating costs, the College could allow the project to continue on a modest scale, and would realize a remarkable return on its investment.

3. The FIPSE project directors should disseminate a description of their development model rather broadly. Other colleges and universities face many of the same challenges as the College at Oswego (scarce resources for faculty development, limited interdisciplinary course offerings, etc.) and could profit from what has been learned at Oswego. Articles in professional journals and conference presentations would be excellent for such efforts.

4. Topics for future interdisciplinary seminars should be selected judiciously. The topics for the seminars must be broad and important enough, of course, to warrant interdisciplinary inquiry. However, two faculty from the Women and Men seminar commented that their topic was

simply too diffuse. All of the subjects which may be addressed under the topic of "Women and Men" cannot possibly be considered in a one semester development seminar or course. Therefore, the faculty and students responsible for the seminar have a responsibility to sharpen and define the scope of their efforts--the price for not doing so could be chaos.

From a pragmatic viewpoint, the topics should also have broad enough appeal so that at least a small group of students are attracted to enroll in the seminars. The Energy seminar was not offered as scheduled due to insufficient enrollment, for example. (Other factors, such as seminar prerequisites and lack of availability of information about the seminar may have contributed to the problem of insufficient enrollment in this instance, as well.)

5. Students should continue to play a role in similar course development efforts, but their role should be better defined. The approach employed by the Myth and Symbol seminar is a good starting point for discussion about this issue.

6. The importance of planning and organization in these rather complex development efforts cannot be over-emphasized. The Women and Men seminar would undoubtedly have been a more worthwhile experience for all concerned if some basic organizational strategies could have been determined, e.g., finding reasonable common meeting times and developing a coherent, yet flexible plan of action. (Of course, this was the first seminar group to meet, so some allowances should be made on that basis alone.) Also, opportunities for preliminary discussions and planning <u>before the work of the seminar commences</u>, like a weekend retreat, should be fostered.

APPENDIX A

Interdisciplinary Development Seminar Evaluation Survey

_____
Name of Development Seminar Group

1. Describe your experiences with the process of developing an interdisciplinary curriculum. How would you describe the major stages of the development process, from the initial formation of the development group to the creation of a final product of some sort? What stands out in your mind as being most notable about this process? Did the group's accomplishments meet your expectations of the development effort? How could the process be streamlined?

2. A stated goal of the project was to "have a positive effect on faculty morale." Was your experience on a development team a renewing and revitalizing one? Would you recommend a similar experience to a colleague?

APPENDIX B

Interdisciplinary Development Seminar Evaluation Survey

_____
Name of Development Seminar Group

1. Describe your experiences with the process of developing an interdisciplinary curriculum. How would you describe the major stages of the development process, from the initial formation of the development group to the creation of a final product of some sort? What stands out in your mind as being most notable about this process? Did the group's accomplishments meet your expectations of the development effort? How could the process be streamlined?

2. A stated goal of the project was for students to "engage in a free exchange of ideas with faculty and confront sophisticated analyses of disciplinary approaches to a given topic. In addition to the fact that these students will contribute a useful perspective to the course development process, they will also, perhaps for the first time, shoulder responsibility for structuring the study of a topic." In your experience, were these goals realized for student participants in the seminars?

APPENDIX C

Student Evaluation
Interdisciplinary Seminars
Honors College, State University of New York at Oswego

Directions

Please provide thoughtful, but concise answers to each of the following questions. Your remarks will be of great value to the conduct of an independent evaluation of the Interdisciplinary Seminars Program.

1. Class: (circle one) freshman sophomore junior senior

2. Major: _____

3. Are you a student in the Honors College? yes no

4. Briefly state your reason(s) for electing to enroll in this seminar?

5a. Students at Oswego State have the opportunity to enroll in a great variety of courses, irrespective of their fields of study. For instance, individual courses differ in terms of size (large lecture to small seminar), instructional approach (entirely lecture, independent study, discussion) and difficulty (very easy to very difficult). In the space below, choose the one course (you may only chose one) which you believe to be most representative of the courses you have enrolled in at Oswego State.

_____ (title of course)

5b. How does this Interdisciplinary Seminar compare to the course you listed in 5a? In responding, you may wish to consider factors such as course content and difficulty, your effort in the course, instructional approaches and amount of assigned work.

6a. What were your original expectations of the Seminar?

6b. How did what actually happened in the course differ from your original expectations?

7. Please consider the effect, if any, the Seminar might have had upon your ability to consider complex issues and problems? Were the intellectual processes you engaged in somehow different from those one might engage in while enrolled in other courses at the College? If so, how were they different?

8. What characteristics or aspect of the course did you like least? How should this seminar be changed before it is offered to another group of students?

9. What one characteristic or aspect of the course did you enjoy most? Why?